Theories about culture, combined with the missionary imperative to produce ‘native’ churches, had led to the creation of a racial hierarchy within the mission by the 1940s. While the mission increasingly included Fijian and Indo-Fijian ministers into its spheres of government, there were still modes by which missionaries distanced themselves from their non-European colleagues and projected their own seniority. Fijian-born ministers were increasingly frustrated by the racialist system and were finding new ways to articulate their disaffection. To appease them, the mission board, still led by General Secretary John W Burton, continued to push the ‘three selves’ church policy, trying to increase, in controlled ways, greater non-European representation in leadership positions. However, just as had been the case between Burton and the previous chairman, Richard McDonald, there were tensions with the new chairman, the Reverend William Green, from 1938 to 1947. This chapter looks at missionaries’ continued efforts to understand and manage the mission’s colonial culture, from commissions to providing missionaries with anthropological training. Functional anthropology still prompted missionaries to question the morality of colonialism. Accusations of racism from ministers in Fiji could

no longer be ignored, nor could the grumblings from the broader Methodist community. It was during these war years that earlier bids to challenge European hegemony crystallised in moments of polite confrontation.

Throughout this period, international mission networks still influenced the Methodists in Fiji, prompting its leaders to regularly consider the processes by which the mission could develop into a fully fledged church. The mission sent its first non-European representative to the 1938 International Missionary Council Conference, held in Madras, India. This was the Rotuman minister, the Reverend Wilisoni Inia, who travelled to the conference with the Reverend Arthur Blacket, a European missionary who was representing the Indo-Fijian mission branch. Conference delegates at Madras reiterated the need to encourage ‘younger’, ‘native’ churches to develop and to transfer governance to indigenous ministers. The conference was charged with idealism. With such a vast array of mission fields represented, it was not easy to prescribe a model for devolution that would suit all situations. However, one important concept was discussed at this particular conference that was subsequently adopted in the Fijian mission field. This was the ‘indigenisation’ of Christianity. Until then, missionaries at these conferences had referred to the burgeoning churches as ‘younger’ or ‘native’ churches. They now started to think about ‘indigenous’ churches, and the ‘indigenisation’ of Christianity. The process of ‘indigenisation’, discussed at the 1938 mission conference in Tambaram for example, offered something slightly new, a progression in the belief that the churches had to be transformed to fit within their local cultural context. The term ‘indigenisation’ came to sum up the ‘three selves’ church concept; the ideal of self-support, self-propagation and self-governance was increasingly linked to a broader effort to acculturate Christianity.

The Madras conference delivered the message that indigenous churches should not be ‘copies of the Churches in the West in economic, social and cultural matters’. If western powers were to leave their colonies, as delegates suspected might occur in the near future, indigenous missions needed to rely on their own financial systems. Evidently, the ethnicised and hierarchical system of wage allocation that had been adopted in Fiji throughout previous decades had

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7 Ibid., p. 313.
been used in other mission fields. The rate of ministers’ pay had often been
decided based on the assumed living standards of their cultural practices.
Conference delegates also suggested that self-support models ‘should not be
judged by western norms’, and that ‘the cultural identity of these peoples will
have to show itself also on the economic and social level’.\(^8\) Henry Venn, who is
widely considered the father of the concept of the ‘three selves church’ idea,
had believed that native ministers should be paid a wage similar to that earned
by members of their congregation, so that there would not be a gulf created
between ministers and their congregations.\(^9\) However, the stratified wage system
was progressively more problematic as race consciousness increased. European
assumptions about culture had been used as the framework for the mission’s
administration and pay schemes, because this was the policy pulsating from
the heart of the global mission movement. Non-European ministers in the field
increasingly detested its racial undertones.

European missionaries still had a degree of autonomy and could address the
‘indigenisation’ process as they saw fit. Harold Bock replaced Arthur Lelean
as superintendent at Nailaga. He arrived in Fiji in 1936, stationed first at Lau,
and then moving to Nailaga in Ra circuit. Unlike many missionaries before him,
Bock did not see Fijian and Indo-Fijian cultures as irreconcilable, or believe
that the mission should be so separate. He was appointed to serve in the Fijian
branch of the mission, yet in 1939 he was anxious to start learning Hindi,
thinking it would be helpful around the north-west of Viti Levu, which was
home to a large part of the Indo-Fijian population.\(^10\) Racial boundaries had been
constructed around language difference in the past, and Bock believed that it
was important to continue preaching in Fijian and Indo-Fijian languages, but
that the mission’s workers should transcend those linguistic boundaries and
speak all of the colony’s dominant languages.

Another minister who was to be instrumental in challenging the existing
boundaries within the mission arrived on Suva Wharf in 1941. The Reverend
Maurice Wilmshurst met the Reverend Alan Tippett and his family at the wharf.
He escorted them in a taxi, and they passed through the ‘Indian section’ of Suva
and along ‘All Nation’s Street’ to the Toorak mission compound, where they
spent their first night, before travelling to the Nadroga mission circuit house
at Cuvu.\(^11\) From his first day in Fiji, Tippett was aware of the segregated nature
of Fijian society, and was watchful of World War II’s impact on the colony.
Tippett had arrived in Fiji just six months before Japan’s military bombed the

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8  Ibid.
9  P Williams, The Ideal of the Self-Governing Church: A Study in Victorian Missionary Strategy, Leiden,
10  H Bock to W Green, 16 February 1939, F/1/1939, NAF p. 2.
11  A R Tippett to friends and family, 16 May 1941, TIP 70/39/1/3, p. 2.
American base at Pearl Harbour. There was already a military presence in the colony. Troops had already been stationed on the west side of the island at Nadi, and a military camp established at Dilkusha, the Indo-Fijian mission station at Nausori.  

The mission mirrored the colonial administration’s bids to safeguard Fijian interests, continuing to acquire land through negotiation with mataqali landowners — according to the protectionist land tenure system, for example. While missionaries supported Fijian land access, they also occasionally represented the Indo-Fijian community in land negotiations. For example, William Green and W Rex Steadman visited Fijian land owners to negotiate land use for the Indo-Fijian mission station at Penang, ‘and ask them “vaka-Viti” [in the Fijian way] to lease the land to us’. In this instance, missionaries acted in a triumvirate with the colonial administration and Fijian landowners to negotiate the terms on which Indo-Fijians would use the land, enhancing the sense that Indo-Fijians were on the outer, separate and isolated.

Although European missionaries tended to give Fijian interests precedence in the mission, Fijians still resisted European hegemony. The farmers from Toko articulated their desire for a national Fijian church. During the Fijian session of the 104th Annual Methodist Fiji District Synod, which opened on 13 October 1941, the Toko farmers approached the mission’s chairman, William Green, who was seated with Maurice Wilmhurst, then superintendent of the Suva Indo-Fijian circuit, and the Reverend Robert Green, principal of Davuilevu. The farmers presented 118 tabua (whale teeth), collected from chiefs throughout the islands, and £500. The presentation involved a lengthy speech, done in customary fashion. Seated in the prime position to oversee proceedings, the chairman witnessed the changing tide — the sands were shifting under the feet of the European ministry. The farmers asked William Green to fulfil the promise of self-government and self-support.

Ratu Nacanieli Rawaidranu and the Reverend Arthur Lelean had been instrumental to this petition. In 1936, the year that Arthur Lelean left the circuit and returned to Australia, the farmers pledged to work towards a separate Fijian church conference. Many details remain obscured as to who initially came up with the idea to appeal for a Fijian church. Under Rawaidranu’s leadership, wages

were collected from the farmers and put towards credit at Morris Hedstrom for labourers and their families, as well as the fund for a self-supporting church.\textsuperscript{17} The farmers were aware of the mission's debt of £4,658, and though they could not pay it, they hoped to raise funds in Australia and Fiji to pay off the debt, so as to ‘achieve our goal’.\textsuperscript{18} They wanted an autonomous church, ‘for it is a sign of weakness to be leaning on others and not making decisions for ourselves’.\textsuperscript{19} The farmers believed the church provided an avenue through which to display the strength of the \textit{vanua} — Fijian people, culture and land.

The decision to take \textit{tabua} to the 1941 synod was deliberate. By presenting both \textit{tabua} and money, the farmers enlisted both indigenous and colonial cultural capital. The \textit{tabua} — yellowed, riveted and linked at each end to rough roped sennit — at once symbolised the connection between the giver and receiver, and embodied ‘everything that is chiefly in nature, including chiefly behaviour and socially valued chiefly qualities’.\textsuperscript{20} It catered to the chiefly factions in the church and the European missionaries’ understanding of the ongoing pre-eminence of chiefly opinion in the church.\textsuperscript{21} The Toko farmers had collected the \textit{tabua} through the \textit{vakaturaga} practice, through appealing to chiefs, suggestive of a pan-Fijian chiefly alliance in support of the request.\textsuperscript{22} The \textit{tabua} were material symbols that marked the connectedness of the \textit{vanua}.\textsuperscript{23} As Gosden and Marshall have demonstrated, \textit{tabua} reflect a link between the past and the present through their biographies, handed from person to person in constant transition. While the biographies of the \textit{tabua} were important in recognising the longevity of the desire for self-governance within the mission, they also bore the future imaginings of the mission. A presentation of \textit{tabua} also suggested dissatisfaction with the trajectory the community seemed to be on, recognition that transformation was needed to transcend the ‘entanglements of the \textit{vanua}’.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{17} K Close, field notes, Yaladro, 2010; \textit{Tulanoo}, Senivalati Toroki and Emosi Tabumasi, nephews of N Rawaidranu, June 2013.
\textsuperscript{18} M G Wilmshurst to C F Gribble, 12 Sept 1949, File 1949, Movement for independent conference in Fiji, MOM Correspondence and papers, Fiji 1905–1953
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} A D Ravuvu, \textit{The Fijian Ethos}, Suva, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1987, p. 324.
The *tabua* carried the farmers’ hopes for the future; by transferring the *tabua* to the hands of William Green, they hoped that he would consider their request and enact their plan for self-governance.25

The farmers wrote a letter, entitled ‘The new way in which advance may be sought’, that outlined their aims and wants.26 The farmers wanted to be ‘partners in establishing the Methodist Church’.27 They did not expect that the mission would become independent for a number of years, and did not hope to separate from the Australian General Conference, or for the European staff to leave the colony.28 They wanted European missionaries to ‘lead us or teach us until the time they think that we can be left to ourselves and if it is approved, some of our youths be trained in Theological Institutions in Australia’.29

The scheme relied on chiefly networks to levy support in the broader Fijian community.30 The farmers had intended to go to the Council of Chiefs and explain the scheme to gain support, believing that the chiefs would ‘not be able to neglect it for the Church and land is theirs’.31 The rhetoric of exclusion, tradition, chiefs (*turaga*, *lotu* and *vanua*) were adopted to describe the aims of the farmers — this was a Fijian movement for a Fijian church. The synod accepted the money and placed it in a trust. By accepting the *tabua*, the chairman signalled his acceptance of responsibility to fulfil the farmers’ request.32 Wilmshurst wrote that the ‘upshot of the discussion’ was that synod had been given the money and yet were left to define the timing of the transition to independence.33 Robert Green’s 1943 article in *The Spectator* offers another perspective on the outcome of the conversation. He suggested that the post-war period would be a time of true reconciliation in the mission, one that required further planning, in which international church bodies would be the main driving force behind a movement to stop ‘misunderstanding and falsehood and prejudice and racialism’.34 The main message was that the mission was not yet ready for devolution. When the matter was reconsidered in 1948, synod decided that the mission should work to clarify and develop the Toko farmers’

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26  M G Wilmshurst to C F Gribble, 12 Sept 1949, Movement for independent conference in Fiji, MOM Correspondence and papers, Fiji 1905–1953, File 1949.
27  Ibid.
28  Ibid.
29  Ibid.
30  Ibid.
31  Ibid.
33  M G Wilmshurst to C F Gribble, 12 Sept 1949, Movement for independent conference in Fiji, MOM Correspondence and papers, Fiji 1905–1953, File 1949, ML.
6. COLONIALISM AND CULTURE THROUGHOUT THE PACIFIC WAR

plans. Wilmshurst suggested that this ‘movement has come and will grow and it requires that we think with them and guide them. This does not mean immediate independence for the Fijian Church but that we now assume the lead.’

Rawaidranu died in 1941. Neither he nor Arthur Lelean were able to attend the presentation at the 1941 synod. Samisoni Lalaqila, Rawaidranu’s nephew, led the farmers after Rawaidranu’s death and helped to establish the Toko auxiliary, a formal organisation that represented the farmers. Noticing that change was not immediate, Lalaqila tried to find out what had happened to the farmers’ money, corresponding with William Green and Arthur Lelean. Wilmshurst corresponded with Arthur Lelean about the Toko farmers’ finances after their secretary, Akarifa Aravure, made enquiries in 1948. In his response, Arthur Lelean recalled the intimidation that the farmers had experienced:

… native farmers would just be about to plant a crop on soil prepared by great effort — often by moonlight — and an officer would appear with demands for 1 pound per head for Government, tax, soli … and absence from Town Duties. The money was always available from Ratu Naca [Ratu Nacanieli Rawaidranu], who carried pencil and paper with him, and a messenger or two for a sprint to Nailaga Ba. But the ‘catch’ was to catch the men before the messengers would make a book, and he was only one. Other opposition was just as acute later …

The galala sites had been monitored closely. While historian Timothy Macnaught argued that the communities had enjoyed a short burst of enthusiasm before ‘going to sleep’, the mission archives and recollections of the farmers’ families show that while the Navatu company might have stalled in 1938 when the 10-year lease ended at Toko, the farmers continued to function as an auxiliary group, to pursue their hopes for a Fijian Lotu Wesele.

35 M G Wilmshurst to C F Gribble, 12 Sept 1949, Movement for independent conference in Fiji, MOM Corr and papers, Fiji 1905–1953, File 1949. Garrett noted that missionaries accepted the need to change but that it did not necessarily occur in a manner that the farmers expected. J Garrett, Where Nets Were Cast: Christianity in Oceania since World War Two, Suva, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific in association with the World Council of Churches, 1997, p. 392.
36 M G Wilmshurst to A D Lelean, 18 May 1948, F/3/1947–8m, NAF; W Green to A D Lelean, 31 Oct 1948, F/3/1947–8m, NAF. It is unclear from these letters what finances Aravure was inquiring about, whether it was funds donated to the church or something to do with the Navatu company.
37 A D Lelean to M G Wilmshurst, 10 July 1948, F/3/1947–8m, pp. 1–2.
Having heard the farmers’ demands, European missionaries conceded that the time had come to accelerate efforts to decolonise the mission. Burton demanded better missionaries and administrators for the Pacific, advocating for missionaries and administrators to train in anthropology, and for government anthropologists to be appointed in mission fields. His ideas echoed Elkin’s treatise for missions from nearly 10 years prior. Burton’s critique of missionary efforts had offended several missionaries still in the field. William Green wrote to Bock in 1944 quoting some of the mission board’s minutes: ‘Some things are becoming clearer in regard to the missionary effort. The first is that we must obtain a more capable and better equipped type of missionary.’ Green was so aggrieved by the insinuation that current mission workers were doing a poor job that he threatened to leave the mission, believing that the board sought an opportunity to replace him. Bock consoled him and managed to soothe Green’s wounded ego.

It was clear that industry was bringing swift changes to the Pacific, and Burton was convinced that less educated missionaries would struggle to keep pace with the modern era. The war brought new job opportunities and the colonial administration alleviated some of the strict labour legislation of earlier decades, raising hopes that the mission would receive higher financial contributions from its membership. In 1940, Bock assessed how the increasing industrialisation of Viti Levu’s north-west was impacting the mission’s finances and found that, despite the increase in personal incomes for Fijian families, the mission’s revenue was falling. Some sections of the circuit raised their quota year after year, and built new churches, he reported, but others dwindled. He blamed the ‘utter weakness of some of the talatala, who could succeed under the old conditions, or still in a place like Lau’. He noted the differences between Ra and Lau. The ‘enormous foreign population and its industries’ was robbing ‘the Fijian … of his former simplicity and most of our talatala are failing to influence the modern Fijian. My balance sheet shows where the weak men are.’ Green said that while many Methodists had found work in the gold mine at Tavua, the ‘influence of the gold mines must have a serious effect on the general attitude of the Fijian in regard to Vakamisioneri’. He agreed that Bock was carrying ‘too many passengers’ — men who were ‘not pulling their weight’. While European missionaries were being trained in anthropology in preparation for ‘managing’ social change in industrialising colonies, talatala
were not receiving equivalent training at the Davuilevu theological school. The effect of Burton’s training scheme for European missionaries had increased the disparity between European and indigenous mission staff, with the training each group received being designed for different purposes.

In the south-east of the island, Methodist Fijian and Indo-Fijian students studied together at Davuilevu theological school, but racial tensions flared when 21 Indo-Fijian students left the Methodist teacher training school in 1941. They had allegedly complained about food and the general conditions at the institution. Harold Wood attests that the students walked out, but newspapers at the time said that the students were dismissed. The Hindu nationalist group the Arya Samaj used this opportunity to point to the colonial nature of the mission. The Arya Samaj leader Pundit Motichand held meetings in Ra and demanded that the colonial administration take action against the Methodists. Richard Piper, still working in the Indo-Fijian branch, reported on the situation to Green and said that Indo-Fijian Methodists had ‘stood by very loyally and done their best to combat the horrible lies which were sent out against us’. However:

One or two [of their members] have chosen to stand for racial interests rather than for Christian principles, and have dropped away from the church, but our leaders in the Indian church are going to be the stronger for the testing.

Piper stated that ‘when the students realised that they had been sacrificed to the god of racialism and political agitation they were most distressed’. The Arya Samaj had only been fleetingly successful in rallying supporters from the Methodist community, persuading only a few people to break away. In the end, the colonial administration became involved, coming down on the mission’s side and deeming the students’ expulsion to be fair.

Despite not having formal anthropological training, Alan Tippett was interested in the question of cross-cultural encounters. At his station at Nadroga, Tippett worked with eight ordained Fijians, 48 catechists, 18 village teachers, and 398 local preachers within a 700-mile area. At the start, Tippett was at odds

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51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
with the colonial mentality and practices alive within the Methodist mission.\textsuperscript{56} He observed that the balance of power remained with his European colleagues, with whom he was expected to collaborate on the practice of disciplining native ministers, including the withholding of wages.\textsuperscript{57} He was also initially perturbed by the extent to which chiefs exerted power within the mission, writing to William Green that he held ‘the decisions of the synod as considerably more important than the wishes of the chiefs’.\textsuperscript{58} Chiefs were consulted and their opinions valued on ministerial appointments, but Tippett saw the need to give greater heed to the opinions of \textit{talatala} and European missionaries. Though interested in Fijian culture, Tippett did not believe it necessary to incorporate chiefly power into Methodism, seeking a more democratic system.

Tippett focused his attentions on training \textit{talatala}. The mission had tended to seek out ‘middle class’ chiefs for the ministry, and by the 1940s they had noticed one man in particular who fitted this description and had leadership potential. The Reverend Setareki Tuilovoni had grown up on Matuku island, in Natokalou village in the Lau island group. His parents were Akeai Koroi and Ro Mere, his mother was a descendent of the Tui Matuku (chiefs of Matuku).\textsuperscript{59} Being both a chief and a \textit{talatala} meant that Tuilovoni could assert considerable authority. In 1941, while he was employed as a teacher for the mission school on Bau, the mission sent him to Australia on deputation work. Despite his heritage, Tuilovoni was critical of the chiefly system. Delivering a speech at Ulverstone Methodist Church in Tasmania in 1941, he told the congregation that, prior to Christianity, Fiji ‘was under the domination of a dictatorship. The chief was as Hitler in Europe.’ He likened pre-Christian Fiji to Nazi Germany:

\begin{quote}
To-day, democracy was challenged by the common enemy — Hitler. In Hitler’s work, power, purposes and purges, the Fijian saw a typical example of Fiji under the chiefs. His will was absolute and final. And it was the common people who had most to suffer under the chieftain dictator. One chieftain visiting another’s island kingdom would have his visit attended by the gift of the death of a score of common people. When the visit was reciprocated, as an act of courtesy, the number of deaths would be increased to make a good impression. Consequently, the common people had more to gain from Christianity.\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} H Bock to W Green, 20 June 1942, F/1/1942, NAF.
\textsuperscript{58} A R Tippett to W Green, 25 November 1941, F/1/1941, NAF, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{59} T Baleiwaqa, ‘Setareki Akeai Tuilovoni and the Young People’s Department of the Methodist Church in Fiji (1951–1957)’, Bachelor of Divinity thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1987, p. 6; Reel 3, PMB 1072, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{60} ‘Message from the Church: What Fiji Owes to the Church’, \textit{The Advocate}, Tasmania, 13 October 1941, p. 2.
His speech reflected the wartime context in which it was delivered, but Tuilovoni’s words signalled a bid to demonstrated modernity. In his critique of pre-Christian chiefs, Tuilovoni focused on the changes Christianity delivered to Fijians, depicting the moderation of chiefly power as beneficial. He argued that
Christian missions had ‘laid the foundations of civilisation’, and missionaries had prepared Fiji for ‘the wiles of western civilisation’. This comment indicated Tuilovoni’s engagement with concepts of ‘primitive’ and ‘civilised’ societies, depicted indigenous culture as liminal, with Christianity operating as a linking element that carried Fijian culture from one stage to another in the path toward ‘civilisation’. When he referred to the *vanua*, Tuilovoni suggested that Fijian land had ‘not been taken from them, because Christianity preceded civilisation’. There was a racial undercurrent through his speech that linked back to the anxieties about the *vanua*.

Confident that Tuilovoni’s profile was on the rise, Burton challenged the existing structure of the mission in mid-1941, calling for the elimination of the European synod. ‘I think your District is the only place in the World where such a thing exists’, Burton told William Green, ‘It is one thing to have a European committee … but I can see very grave dangers in the future in having a specifically European session’. Burton sent Green a sample of the New Guinea mission constitution as a guide for changes to the Fijian constitution. He wanted the European synod to be dismantled, but maintained that ‘separate committees for the Indian and Fijian work’ needed ‘to be endorsed by the Synod as a whole’. William Green argued that closing the European synod would not eradicate racial tensions, but would further separate the Fijian branch from the Indo-Fijian branch of the mission. In Green’s opinion, the European synod acted an essential point of contact between the mission’s branches.

Burton was heavily critical of the European synod. The previous year, the Indo-Fijian branch had 296 full members and 196 adherents, compared with 98,255 adherents in the Fijian branch. He designed a questionnaire to assess the ‘state of Indian work in Fiji’ in August 1941 and sent it to people working in both branches of the mission. Bock was amongst the first to reply, voicing his concern about the ‘nationalistic’ attitude, resulting from the continued practice of the ‘customs and faiths of Mother India’. Bock felt that this contributed

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61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 J W Burton to W Green, 14 August 1941, Fiji District correspondence — some regarding constitution, MOM 386, ML.
64 J W Burton to W Green, 17 Sept 1941, Fiji District correspondence — some regarding constitution, MOM 386, ML.
65 W Green to J W Burton, 3 Sept 1941, Fiji District correspondence — some regarding constitution, MOM 386.
67 J W Burton to W Green, 15 August 1941, Questionnaires were sent out regarding state of Indian work in 1941, item 8, MOM 238, ML.
68 H Bock to JW Burton, 13 October 1941, Questionnaires were sent out regarding state of Indian work in 1941 — J W Burton to W Green, 15 August 1941, item 8, MOM 238, ML.
to the Indo-Fijian communities’ separation from the rest of Fijian society, and spurred derision amongst the Indo-Fijians for Fijians, who he believed were ‘in some respects inferior and in some respects superior to the Indians’.  

Bock believed that Europeans were disliked because they had pushed Indo-Fijians into a position of ‘dependence in both rule and finance’. He considered it ‘a psychological fact that the Indians, as with some of our own people, they dislike most those from whom they receive most assistance, because of the feeling of dependence and inferiority which that assistance engenders’. In an effort to combat the sense of inferiority, Indo-Fijians ‘imitated’ Europeans, yet professed ‘to despise European philosophy, customs, and civilisation’. Bock believed that moving the mission towards self-support would subdue opposition to colonial rule, and increase in the Indo-Fijian staff’s responsibilities. A commitment to self-support and self-governance would result in ‘increased zeal’ in the Indo-Fijian branch. Institutionalised evangelism had failed, and evangelism had to be ‘properly tried’ outside of the mission’s institutions, or there would be no rapid progress among Indo-Fijians, ‘for they are an exceedingly difficult people’.

Several responses to Burton’s questionnaire referred to European prestige. There was a perception among Indo-Fijians that European missionaries were living more comfortably than the majority of the Indo-Fijian community and this created a barrier between the missionaries and potential converts. Missionary A Cyril Cato suggested that European missionaries related well with members of the Indo-Fijian community, but that they ‘necessarily’ lived above the standard enjoyed by some members of the Indo-Fijian community. He did not consider this to be a sign of racial exclusivity, as some Indo-Fijians enjoyed a better standard of living than European missionaries. Alice Inez Hames, a mission sister, echoed this assertion. She had arrived in Fiji in 1920 and had worked in both the Indo-Fijian and Fijian mission branches. Dr Dorothy Delbridge, a Methodist medical missionary working at Ba hospital, believed that accusations of racism were unavoidable in Fiji. While ‘a missionary may try

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69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 A C Cato to J W Burton, 4 Oct 1941, CY3465, MOM 238, ML.
to avoid racial discrimination, it cannot be wholly eliminated’. She declared: ‘The Indian is very sensitive to any suggestion of inferiority or of subservience to the European.’

Their responses illuminated European conceptions of race in the early 1940s, and the ways it inhibited the mission’s progress. The Reverend Norman Wright, superintendent at Lautoka, was not convinced that the board in Sydney fully understood the challenges experienced by missionaries in the field. When speaking on the topic of self-support and self-governance in the Indo-Fijian branch, Wright wrote:

The Board’s ideal of giving the Indians the privilege of selecting their workers and paying them seems to me but to push on to the European missionary the problem of having an Indian colleague who does his work and not know how to pay him because the Indian congregation will not pay. As for selecting workers, I never remember in the last fifteen Synods, the name of an Indian applying for preaching work being voted against by the Indian members, whoever the man or woman may have been.

Issues of pay, competence and racial allegiances were woven throughout Wright’s comment. On the topic of self-governance, Dorothy Delbridge argued that the time had not yet arrived to give greater control to Indo-Fijian church leaders: ‘There are possibly a few capable of running some of the institutions, but those folk have already fulltime jobs. The Christian constituency is too small to produce men of ability in sufficient numbers for the carrying on of the work.’ The small Indo-Fijian membership contributed to the slow pace of devolution. Delbridge revealed the frustrations at the limited success with conversions that in turn had limited the pool of potential Indo-Fijian leaders. Missionaries had assumed that Ramsey Deoki’s ordination and increased responsibility would boost the mission’s Indo-Fijian membership as well as its financial income, but no significant impact had been noticed.

The process of indigenising Christianity was also discussed in these questionnaire responses. Conversions were also stifled due to missionaries’ limited knowledge of Indian languages. The colonial administration in Fiji had recognised Urdu, Tamil and Teluga languages, but the mission’s sermons were delivered only in Hindi. Piper was again attuned to how this was perceived, believing that ‘[t]he Moslems and the South Indians construe this as a sign of lack of sympathy on the part of the mission’. In addition to the poor efforts..."
made with language, Dorothy Delbridge felt ‘too much emphasis has been placed upon Christian customs or European customs rather than adapting Christianity to Indian life’, listing singing, marriage, funerals, christenings and worship as areas that could be altered.\textsuperscript{82} She spoke of the power of the European missionary, referring to the discipleship of the Indo-Fijian Methodists not to God, but to European culture; the Indo-Fijian mission was ‘a pale imitation of our Western churches’, with ‘no true Indian flavour in it at all’. She mourned that the ‘vestige of the beautiful Indian symbolism has dropped out … The Indian spirit is not in the Indian church’.\textsuperscript{83} Delbridge finished with this potent comment that echoed Hannah Dudley’s observations from 40 years before:

\begin{quote}
    It seems to the outside Indian that to join the Indian church is to turn his back upon his own race and culture and to become a religious disciple of the white man. Therefore we must let the Indian Church be Indian, and that will not be while we are prominent in it.\textsuperscript{84}
\end{quote}

Delbridge hoped for renewed efforts to ‘Indianise’ the church as a way to combat public perceptions of the church, so much affiliated with colonialism.

Burton sought input from Indo-Fijian staff as well as European mission workers. Deoki’s response was lengthy. He claimed that the church had failed to bring Indo-Fijian Christians into ‘the higher light, the higher morality in Christ Jesus’.\textsuperscript{85} He said that:

\begin{quote}
    The greatest drawback is the introduction of the ‘white caste’. Every Indian especially every educated Indian feels it most keenly. Instead of the missionary showing the Christian way to these Indians that we are really all one — he has kept alone from the people — he has not mixed freely with the Indian — and this has been the chief excuse of Christian failure.\textsuperscript{86}
\end{quote}

He said that the European synod gave a place to any young European minister ‘because he is a European’, and that the same opportunities were not available to Indo-Fijian ministers. Deoki felt that despite his best efforts, the odds were always stacked against him due to his race.\textsuperscript{87} He wrote: ‘It is high time now that the “white prestige” idea be abandoned from our midst, and where there are racial discriminatory measures in our constitution and church, they

\textsuperscript{82} D Delbridge, response, Questionnaires regarding state of the Indian work, CY 3465, MOM 238, ML, pp. 3, 5.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., p. 5.
\textsuperscript{84} D Delbridge, response, Questionnaires regarding state of the Indian work, CY 3465, MOM 238, ML, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{85} R Deoki, response, Questionnaires regarding state of the Indian work, CY 3465, MOM 238, ML, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., pp. 12–13.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., pp. 14–15.
too should be amended.’ 

... the modern missionary would rather spend three or four hours at the typewriter or with some book rather than spend an hour in the home of the Indian! It is a fact that there is better friendship and fellowship between Indians and ordinary Europeans than with missionaries and Indians! 

Deoki also claimed: ‘In most cases the general standard of living of the missionary is too far above the people to whom he is supposed to minister, but not in every case.’ 

There were degrees to which missionaries admitted to the importance of race in the mission, but Deoki could not have articulated his opposition to its racialisation more clearly. He called for European missionaries to nullify racial categorisation, declaring that a mission defined by race was ‘doomed to failure’. 

This challenged existing notions that an indigenous church had to be linked to a ‘national character’, for he pointed to how this had promoted racial separation. Deoki questioned the whole notion of an ‘Indian church’:

Why should the emphasis on race be so prominent in a cosmopolitan country as Fiji? Specialisation, we read in economics is good, but overspecialisation is bad. It is time also where Church organisation is concerned. Racial divisions for the sake of greater effectiveness is good, but when over emphasis on the racial division is placed then it is certainly harmful. 

Deoki believed that the colony was not ‘Indo-Fijian’ or ‘Fijian’ but English. He no longer wanted the mission’s constitution to refer to Indo-Fijians as a ‘native race’. ‘It is my own experience’, Deoki wrote. ‘If my own faith has been sorely tried, what of the ordinary Indian believers. For years I have asked for the Christian treatment to Indians, and it has been denied.’

At the peak of World War II, Indo-Fijian farmers were displaced in Nadi to make way for Allied troops, and the cost of living rose. Workers were being organised by the sugar cane workers’ unions, the Kisan Sangh and Akhil Fiji Krishak Maha Sangh (All Fiji Farmers’ Association). Against this backdrop of industrial action, Deoki launched his campaign against the racial system of pay within

88 Ibid., p. 32.
89 Ibid., p. 28.
90 Ibid., pp. 28–29.
91 Ibid., p. 29.
92 Ibid., p. 25.
93 Ibid., p. 23.
94 Ibid., p. 35.
95 Ibid., p. 36.
the mission. If circuits were to become self-supporting, Fijian and Indo-Fijian ministers would have to be paid from Methodist membership contributions. In 1942, Deoki’s ministerial salary was £180 per annum plus allowances, while his European colleagues earned approximately £344 per annum. The chairman paid the European missionaries, who in turn paid the talatala and the Indo-Fijian minister. Deoki was working under the supervision of Norman Wright at Nadi, despite being equally qualified. To Deoki, his wage was evidence that he was lower in status than his European colleagues.

Wright was conscious that Deoki considered his involvement in delivering his pay as a slight, however, the hope that the mission would one day be financially self-supporting made raising Deoki’s wage seem impossible. They trialled self-support at the Nadi Indo-Fijian circuit, and Wright was worried that the circuit would not raise enough to cover Deoki’s current rate of pay, let alone a higher rate. Deoki’s additional income might have to come from Wright’s own wage. Wright gave personal contributions, but the circuit was still often in debt. Debt was only ‘wiped out’ when there was no minister stationed there who needed to be paid. Wright suggested that rather than increase Deoki’s wage, it should be reduced to ease the financial pressures on the mission at the height of the war. He did not want to be the one to suggest that to Deoki though, hoping that William Green would deliver the message. ‘I do not like the arrangement’, he said, but ‘I do not want the responsibility of a debt later’.

Despite growing concerns, the mission’s racial divide was exacerbated in the early 1940s. In 1943, the mission established an entirely separate Indo-Fijian synod, and an Indo-Fijian division. The reasons given were the ‘differences of language, culture, civic organisation and the very different standard of Indo-Fijian and Fijian ministerial training’. The explanatory notes in the synod minutes acknowledged that this was ‘a racial division, since it is the natural division’. They argued: ‘A division on racial lines is harmful only if it is made in a spirit of racialism — and that spirit certainly does not underlie our suggestions

97 W Green to N Wright, 26 February 1942, F/1/1942, NAF. The total amount for wages paid to European ministers working in the Indian branch in 1940 totalled £1377 10s, and there were four European ministers working in the Indian circuit. I divided the total figure by four to approximate their wages, but there would have been some personal variations between each ministers pay based on their family needs, etc. Deoki’s pay is listed as £180 per annum plus stipends. 1942 Synod Minutes, PMB 1138, p. 7.
98 N Wright to W Green, 12 February 1942, F/1/1942, NAF.
100 Ibid.
for a separate Indian district.” Far from eliminating racial distinction within the mission, the mission had elected to push the separation further, but did so while attempting to dissolve, at least in part, the accusations of European hegemony that dogged the European synod.

In 1943, when there were only 140 Indo-Fijian Methodist adherents, Arthur Blacket again called for two separate districts and the end of the European synod, and was supported by Norman Wright, Robert Smith, Ramsey Deoki, Ram Padarath and Donnelly. It was suggested that unity would ‘spring from the soul’, and did not need to be expressed outwardly. The call for separation was not for ‘racial feeling of Indian against Fijian’, but it was admitted that there was a ‘deep feeling of frustration’ at the way that the mission was then structured. Indo-Fijian members of the mission were made to feel excluded, which prevented cooperation. Blacket had suggested the mission needed two chairman — one for each district — but Deoki told Green after this meeting that he felt that it would be best to have just one chairman for one district in Fiji, rather than separate the districts under two different chairmen. Deoki considered the idea of separation to be at odds with the Christian message of unity, an idea he had already begun to form in his response to Burton’s questionnaire. His call for cohesion, the first to come from within the mission, sat at odds with European missionaries’ efforts to maintain the separation between the Fijian and Indo-Fijian mission work.

Missionaries struggled to create a more inclusive atmosphere, still mindful of the principle of indigenising churches. In 1944, the Reverend Cyril Germon took part in reviewing the Davuilevu curriculum. A comparative religion subject was introduced, including studies of ‘Mohammadanism, Confucianism, Hinduism’. Increased awareness of difference was seen as a means by which to bridge the divide between ministers in training and potential converts. Bock and Germon were unsure about their strategy, wondering about the extent to which materials for the comparative religions course should be translated into Fijian. Bock supposed that translation might defeat the purpose of the course, which was to lift the students’ awareness of other cultures, not further embed their own. However, as the mission still placed high value on the process of ‘indigenising’ faith, Bock’s hesitation was cast aside and texts selected for translation into a standardised form of the Fijian language, based on the Bauan dialect, including the Reverend Wesley Pidgeon’s translation of ‘Joni Wesele’

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101 Ibid.
102 Fiji District correspondence — some regarding constitution, MOM 386, ML; 1943 Synod meeting minutes, PMB 1138.
103 ‘Explanatory notes on the proposed constitution for a separate Indian District in Fiji’, June 1943, F/3/1945–59D, NAF.
104 R Deoki to W Green, circa August 1943, F/1/1943, NAF.
105 C Germon to H Bock, 22 November 1944, F/1/1944, NAF.
(John Wesley), a biography of the father of Methodism.\(^{106}\) In 1944, Tuilovoni commenced his probation with the Reverend Wesley Pidgeon at Tavua, where they worked together to respond to the call to indigenise church structures.\(^{107}\) Pidgeon wrote to Green that year:

> We have not established our ‘Lotu Wesele’ on a Fijian basis. Rather, we have adapted our Church organisation to the needs of the Fijian people and thus we have kept them in definite fellowship of the ‘mother’ church and through her with World Methodism and the World Church.\(^{108}\)

Pidgeon and Tuilovoni established Fijian youth groups, grounded in Fijian culture. They translated the constitution, hymns, and what we can presume was Handel’s version of the hallelujah chorus, and created Fijian dramas.\(^{109}\)

As acculturation work occupied minds at Tavua, the Indo-Fijian branch continued to flounder with limited numbers and its minority status within the mission. Deoki believed that the Indo-Fijian branch would remain a mission and would not become a fully fledged church ‘for a good many years’, effectively remaining in the shadow of the Fijian church that was far closer to independence.\(^{110}\) With so few members, Deoki recognised that the Indo-Fijian Methodist community would struggle to be financially self-sustaining. Even so, he requested that he be awarded ‘missionary status in regard to salaries and allowances’.\(^{111}\) He believed that this would not only ‘end a lot of heart-burnings’, but it would ‘make room for the appointment of more Catechists and Workers’.\(^{112}\) Green informed Burton of Deoki’s request. In a lengthy response, Burton listed a raft of justifications for the mission’s refusal to raise Deoki’s wage and status. He echoed the concerns earlier outlined by Wright, that raising Deoki’s wage would significantly slow progress towards an independent Indo-Fijian church, and added that it would also ‘create difficulties with our Fijian Ministers and with our Indian Ministers in India’.\(^{113}\) The limited number of Indo-Fijian converts crippled the ideal of self-governance and financial self-support, stalling devolution. This had significant political consequences.\(^{114}\)

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\(^{110}\) R Deoki to W Green, 11 July 1944, F/1/1944, NAF.

\(^{111}\) Ibid.

\(^{112}\) Ibid.

\(^{113}\) Minutes, cited in J W Burton to R Deoki, 30 November 1944, F/1/1944, NAF.

\(^{114}\) Ibid.
The difficulties of implementing self-support meant that Deoki’s demands were left unmet. Burton wrote directly to Deoki: ‘like your brethren in India, and your Ministerial brethren in Fiji, you are a Minister of an Indigenous church which ultimately we hope will be self-governing, self-propagating and self-supporting’. Burton argued that the ‘Board has no such sentiments as race, but feels it must maintain the policy which, in its judgement, is the only one to ensure a permanent Christian Church in Fiji’. Burton reminded Deoki that he had been appointed as superintendent of an independent circuit, ‘with the same rights and privileges as any other Minister, and so far as material support is concerned, you have been given salary and allowances and accommodation such as not been given to any other Minister of an Indigenous church’. Burton stated that there had been no limit placed on Deoki’s salary, but if he wanted a higher salary he would have to do so by dipping into funds allocated to the Indo-Fijian branch of the mission: ‘It must be remembered that the Board’s contribution is not a subsidy to any individual worker, but a general grant to the Indian church as a whole to assist it until such time as it can be entirely self-supporting’. Burton thus placed Deoki in the difficult position of having to decide what was more important: a pay rise, or the transition to self-governance for the Indo-Fijian mission.

European missionaries were well aware of the growing support around Fiji for self-governance within the mission. The Toko farmers had requested an independent Fijian church, and there was more than ample evidence of disaffection within the Indo-Fijian branch. Something had to be done to address racialism in the mission’s structure and day-to-day practice. Burton tried to show that he was against the racialist character of the mission by training what he called a ‘new type of missionary’ for work in the islands, and demanded the dissolution of the European synod. However, the mission still bore the marks of the earlier evolutionist ideologies, as evidenced by the continuation of the racialised wage system. Burton struggled to reverse this. He saw it was necessary to try to address the anti-colonial sentiment, but he could still see the distinctions between European, Indo-Fijian and Fijian that had been made firmly a part of the mission’s structure. The matter was further complicated by the low numbers of Indo-Fijian converts, which limited the Indo-Fijian branch’s progress towards self-support. Missionaries in the field also continued to grapple with two divergent ideals of minimising racialisation within the mission, and creating a church that was culturally relevant. Old mission methods, particularly translation of Methodist texts, remained a part of mission work,

115 Ibid.
117 Minutes, cited in J W Burton to R Deoki, 30 November 1944, F/1/1944, NAF.
118 Ibid.
despite undermining efforts at inclusiveness. European missionaries continued to struggle to reconcile the demands of indigenous congregations and ministers with their methods of establishing self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing churches.